

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

Adopted by Session on September 18, 2017

Amended June 17, 2019

Amended February 15, 2021



Central to the mission of Southminster Presbyterian Church (hereinafter, “SPC”) is providing a nurturing shelter and a safe spiritual, emotional and physical fellowship for children and youth. Accordingly, SPC has determined it is necessary and proper to have policies and procedures that protect all parties, including but not limited to: children, youth, staff, leaders and any and all other participants in church-sponsored events.

The following Safe Church Policy (hereinafter the “Policy”) is designed to ensure safety and to build and maintain trust. The focus is to prevent interactions that are recognized by the law as abusive, such as physical, sexual mental and/or emotional abuse, or recognized by both law and policy as inappropriate, and to establish procedures for handling all abuse of an interactive nature. The within policy shall be in effect during all church-sponsored events, with the exception of the Child Care Center and the Nursery School, who are governed by alternate state regulations and policies not referenced herein.

I. DEFINITIONS

A. GENERAL

1. **Adult** is any person who is 18 years or older.
2. **Child, Children, and/or Youth** is any person considered a minor under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, that is, a person who is under 18 years of age. Even when a Youth is serving in a leadership role for younger Children, an individual under age 18 can never be considered an Adult and must still be considered a Youth under all Policy requirements.
3. **Vulnerable Adult** is any person 18 years or older without the developmental or cognitive capacity to consent.
4. **Vulnerable Adult Abuse** is any act or failure to act that results in the physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional mistreatment, neglect, or exploitation of a vulnerable adult.
5. **Leader or Volunteer** is any Adult who has direct contact with and responsibility for Children and Youth.
6. **Youth Leader or Youth Volunteer** is any Leader or Volunteer between the ages of 18 and 21.
7. **Visitor** is an individual who has contact with Children, but is not directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance, or control of Children and does not have routine interaction with Children.
8. **Staff** are paid employees of SPC.
9. **Pastoral Staff** are the Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor(s), and Director(s) of Ministries.

10. **Direct Contact with Children** is the care, supervision, guidance or control of Children or routine interaction with Children.
11. **Mandated Reporter** is defined in accordance with the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law, specifically 23 PA.C.S. § 6311(a)(6)-(7),(12)-(14). The term Mandated Reporter includes, but is not limited to the following: “clergyman, priest, rabbi, minister, Christian Science practitioner, religious healer or spiritual leader of any regularly established church or other religious organization;” “an individual paid or unpaid, who, on the basis of the individual’s role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, is a person responsible for the child’s welfare or has direct contact with children;” “an individual supervised or managed” by other Mandated Reporters “who has direct contact with children in the course of employment;” “independent contractors;” and/or “an attorney affiliated with an [...] other entity, including a school or regularly established religious organization that is responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or control of children.”
12. **Routine Interaction** is regular and repeated contact that is integral to a person’s employment or volunteer responsibilities.
13. **Conflict of Interest** is found where any person has competing interests or loyalties that either affect, or may appear to affect a decision of such person with respect to his or her duty, responsibility, or authority under the Policy. Any person with a duty, responsibility or authority under this Policy that has a Conflict of Interest must disclose the Conflict of Interest to a member of the Safe Church Committee, and recuse himself/herself from such duty, responsibility or authority immediately. The following examples illustrate situations that are a Conflict of Interest, to serve as a guide to when a Conflict of Interest may be found:
 - a. Any family relationship (to any degree) with any person involved in a reported event, specifically including the alleged perpetrator and/or a victim or member of the family of either of them;
 - b. Any close personal relationship with a person involved in a reported event such as mentor, supervisor, or teacher;
 - c. Any romantic or sexual relationship with a person involved in a reported event; and
 - d. Any current or prior employment or volunteer relationship with a person involved in a reported event.

B. PROPERTY

1. **Church** refers to SPC building and grounds located at 799 Washington Road, Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania.
2. **Campus** is any and all property owned by SPC including but not limited to Southminster House, Windy Ridge, and vehicles used for transporting Children, Youth, Staff and Leaders to and from Church-Sponsored Events, whether owned or not owned by SPC.

C. COMMITTEES AND TEAMS

1. **Disciple Making Committee** is a Committee of Session comprised of: four Session members, the Director of Children's and Family Ministries, the Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, and other committee members. One Session Member from this committee will serve on the Safe Church Committee as the Session liaison for a three year term.
2. **Safe Church Committee** is a permanent Committee under the direction of Session, through the Disciple Making Committee.
 - a. The members of the Committee shall include:
 - i. Five members of the congregation and one Session Member currently serving on the Disciple Making Committee. Members shall serve three year terms, with members rolling on and off each year.
 - A. Members shall be nominated directly by the Nominating Committee of Session.
 - B. Members of Safe Church Committee shall be nominated from the pool of previously ordained Session members, who are not currently serving on Session.
 - ii. The Director(s) of Youth and Young Adult Ministries and Children's and Family Ministries will participate in meetings of the Committee as staff liaisons.
 - b. The Safe Church Committee has responsibility for the Policy, including, but not limited to:
 - i. regular review of the Policy for effectiveness; drafting recommended changes for Session review. This shall be completed, at minimum, on a bi-annual basis;
 - ii. implementation and enforcement of all aspects of the Policy;
 - iii. training Staff and Leaders;
 - iv. representing SPC, through the "Response Team", in all respects of a reported incident, from the time the incident is reported; protecting the identity and confidentiality of all parties involved in an incident;
 - v. ensure that all aspects of the Policy are properly enforced and executed on the Campus;
 - vi. The Session Member from the "Disciple Making Committee" will report the meeting minutes to Session after each meeting.
 - c. Any church member, Volunteer, Child, Youth, or Youth Leader may report any activity they feel is not right to any member of the Safe Church Committee with complete confidentiality.
 - d. The Safe Church Committee is also responsible for monitoring the culture and relationship of the Staff to prevent or ameliorate any strained or negative relationship. The Safe Church Committee shall report any concerns to the Personnel Committee.

3. **Response Team** consists of a member of Pastoral Staff and one member of the Safe Church Committee trained in Youth Protection and Mandated Reporting. **The Response Team or Personnel Committee will immediately provide for the safety of the alleged victim(s) involved**
 - a. **If the accused is not a Staff member The Response Team will:**
 - i. Once an incident, **not involving a Staff member**, has been reported to the civil authorities, Childline, the “**Response Team**” functions as the “Designated Agent” for dealing with all aspects of the reported incident.
 - ii. Notify the Head Pastor, unless the Head Pastor has a Conflict of Interest, in which case the Associate Pastor or, if no Associate Pastor is on Staff, another member of the Pastoral Staff shall be notified. The Pastor will notify Session with the approved statement of response.
 - iii. Notify the parents of the victim.
 - iv. Notify the Insurance Company - Cincinnati Insurance Company: 877-242-2544
 - v. Generate appropriate responses for SPC and media if necessary
 - vi. Develop a plan for necessary healing for victims, accused, and church, where appropriate
 - b. **If the accused is a member of Staff**, the Elders of the Personnel Committee trained in Youth Protection, Mandated Reporting and Book of Order discipline procedures will function as the Response Team and respond as outlined below.
 - i. Mandated Reporter will notify the Personnel Committee Chair, currently serving on Session.
 - ii. Personnel Chair will notify Session with the approved statement of response.
 - iii. Notify the parents.
 - iv. Notify the Insurance Company - Cincinnati Insurance Company: 877-242-2544.
 - v. Generate appropriate responses for Church and media if necessary.
 - vi. Develop a plan for necessary healing for victims, accused, and church, where appropriate.
 - c. The **Response Team** shall be solely responsible, subject to Session, for all matters related to a reported incident, specifically including, but not limited to:
 - i. relationship with victim(s) and their families, including counseling and/or otherwise meeting their needs;
 - ii. relationship with the authorities;
 - iii. relationship with the accused perpetrator, including removal of any Staff or Leader from all duties with respect to Children or Youth;
 - iv. all communication with any media; and communication of appropriate information to the Congregation, and the Community at large.
 - d. No member of the Response Team that has any actual or apparent Conflict of Interest with respect to any incident shall continue on the Response Team with

respect to said incident. In the case of any conflict, the other member shall appoint a new member from the same class as the member with the conflict, i.e., a Pastoral Staff member will replace the Pastoral Staff member, etc.

- e. The Response Team (or anyone else representing SPC) shall UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES investigate any incident that is reported, and shall not interrogate, interview, or otherwise discuss the incident with the accused perpetrator. After an incident is reported, neither the Response Team, nor anyone else representing SPC, shall interrogate or discuss the incident with the victim and/or victim's family. The Response Team or member of the ordained Pastoral Staff may meet with the victim and/or family for the purpose of supporting them, and may discuss the incident, only if the discussion is initiated by the victim or family.
- f. The identity of the Mandated Reporter shall be strictly confidential, and shall not be revealed to anyone. To the fullest extent possible, the identities of the victim and accused perpetrator shall also be kept confidential. If the perpetrator is charged with a crime, his/her identity is a matter of public record and may become known.

D. CHURCH-SPONSORED EVENT

- 1. **Church-Sponsored Event** is any regularly scheduled event at the Church, the Campus and/or any trips approved by the Session including but not limited to: retreats, mission trips (national and international), off-campus music events, off-campus field trips with Church School or the youth group.

E. CHILD ABUSE – DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE FOR LEGAL PROSECUTION¹

- 1. **Child Abuse** is intentionally, knowingly or recklessly doing any of the following:
 - a. Physical abuse causing bodily injury through any recent act or failure to act. Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act. Bodily injury is impairment of physical condition or substantial pain. The following are “per se” acts of Child Abuse (meaning the act itself, apart from the outcome, is considered child abuse).
 - i. Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing or cutting a Child in a manner that endangers the Child.
 - ii. Unreasonably restraining or confining a Child, based on consideration of the method, location or the duration of the restraint or confinement.
 - iii. Forcefully shaking a Child under one year of age.
 - iv. Forcefully slapping or otherwise striking a Child under one year of age.

¹ These definitions of abuse are from the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (CPSL [Title 23 PA.C.S. Chapter 63], as amended **December**, 2013, to be effective December 31, 2014. They do not apply to consensual activities between a child who is 14 years of age or older and another person who is 14 years of age or older and whose age is within four years of the child's age.

- v. Interfering with the breathing of a Child.
- vi. Causing a Child to be present at a location while a violation of 18 PA.C.S. §7508.2 (relating to operating a methamphetamine laboratory) is occurring, provided that the violation is being investigated by law enforcement.
- b. Fabricating, feigning or intentionally exaggerating or inducing a medical symptom or disease which results in a potentially harmful medical evaluation or treatment to the Child through any recent act.
- c. Mental abuse causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury to a Child through an act, or failure to act, or a series of such acts or failures to act. Serious mental injury is a psychological condition, as diagnosed by a physician or licensed psychologist, including the refusal of appropriate treatment, that:
 - i. renders a Child chronically and severely anxious, agitated, depressed, socially withdrawn, psychotic or in reasonable fear that the Child's life or safety is threatened; or
 - ii. seriously interferes with a Child's ability to accomplish age-appropriate developmental and social tasks.
- d. Neglect causing serious physical neglect of a Child. Serious physical neglect is any of the following when committed by a perpetrator that endangers a Child's life or health, threatens a Child's well-being, causes bodily injury or impairs a Child's health, development or functioning:
 - i. A repeated, prolonged or egregious failure to supervise a Child in a manner that is appropriate considering the Child's developmental age and abilities.
 - ii. The failure to provide a Child with adequate essentials of life, including food, shelter or medical care.
- e. Causing the death of the Child through any act or failure to act.
- f. Causing sexual abuse or exploitation of a Child through any act or failure to act.
- g. Creating a likelihood of sexual abuse or exploitation of a Child through any recent act or failure to act. Sexual abuse or exploitation is any of the following:
 - i. The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement or coercion of a Child to engage in or assist another individual to engage in sexually explicit conduct, which includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - A. Looking at the sexual or other intimate parts of a Child or another individual for the purpose of arousing or gratifying sexual desire in any individual.
 - B. Participating in sexually explicit conversation either in person, by telephone, by computer or by a computer-aided device for the purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification of any individual.
 - C. Actual or simulated sexual activity or nudity for the purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification of any individual.
 - D. Actual or simulated sexual activity for the purpose of producing visual depiction, including photographing, videotaping, computer depicting or filming.

- h. The following are acts of Child Abuse:
 - i. Leaving a Child unsupervised with an individual, other than the Child's parent, who the actor knows or reasonably should have known:
 - A. Is required to register as a Tier II or Tier III sexual offender under 42 PA.C.S. Ch. 97 Subch. H (relating to registration of sexual offenders), where the victim of the sexual offense was under 18 years of age when the crime was committed.
 - B. Has been determined to be a sexually violent predator under 42 PA.C.S. §9799.24 (relating to assessments) or any of its predecessors.
 - C. Has been determined to be a sexually violent delinquent child as defined in 42 PA.C.S. §9799.12 (relating to definitions).
 - i. Any of the following offenses committed against a Child (Criminal code)
 - i. Rape, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 3121 (relating to rape).
 - ii. Statutory sexual assault, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 3122.1 (relating to statutory sexual assault).
 - iii. Involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 3123 (relating to involuntary deviate sexual intercourse).
 - iv. Sexual assault, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 3124.1 (relating to sexual assault).
 - v. Institutional sexual assault, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 3124.2 (relating to institutional sexual assault).
 - vi. Aggravated indecent assault, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 3125 (relating to aggravated indecent assault).
 - vii. Indecent assault, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 3126 (relating to indecent assault).
 - viii. Indecent exposure, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 3127 (relating to indecent exposure).
 - ix. Incest, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 4302 (relating to incest).
 - x. Prostitution, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 5902 (relating to prostitution and related offenses).
 - xi. Sexual abuse, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 6312 (relating to sexual abuse of children).
 - xii. Unlawful contact with a minor, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 6318 (relating to unlawful contact with minor).
 - xiii. Sexual exploitation, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 6320 (relating to sexual exploitation of children).
 - j. Age of Consent:
 - i. In Pennsylvania, children less than 13 years of age cannot grant consent to sexual activity. Teens between the ages of 13 and 15 can consent to sexual activity with peers within a four-year age range. People aged 16 and older can legally consent to sexual activity with anyone they choose, as long as the other person does not have authority over them as defined in Pennsylvania's institutional sexual assault statute.

II. STAFF/LEADER CODE OF CONDUCT

- A. Staff or Leader(s) can be found to have not violated the law, but can still be in violation of the Policy if the “Code of Conduct” has been violated. (attached hereto as Appendix B)
- B. CODE OF CONDUCT: The Staff and Leader(s) of SPC will:
 - 1. represent SPC in a faithful, authentic and loving way, supporting the teachings, disciplines and tradition of the Christian Church;
 - 2. exhibit the highest Christian ethical standards and personal integrity in their day-to-day work and personal lives;
 - 3. conduct themselves in a professional manner in both church and work environments, avoiding any flagrant or public misconduct;
 - 4. hold one another accountable to conduct and standards appropriate to their respective roles;
 - 5. foster the dignity of each person and be committed to the best interests of others;
 - 6. respect the integrity of all individuals and protect the confidentiality of all information to which they have access;
 - 7. abstain from taking advantage of any relationship with a Child, Youth, or Youth Leader for his or her own benefit;
 - 8. abstain from physical, sexual or emotional abuse toward anyone;
 - 9. abstain from neglecting a Child, Youth, Youth Leader who is in their care;
 - 10. abstain from a romantic relationship of any kind with a Child, Youth, Youth Leader whether physical, sexual, or emotional;
 - 11. pray for the Children, Youth, and families of the church community.

III. PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE

- A. Screening and Training: Prior to working with Children and Youth in any program, all Staff Leaders shall:
 - 1. Sign a disclosure statement (attached hereto as Appendix A) indicating that the person has received, read and agrees to comply with the Policy and sign the Code of Conduct (attached hereto as Appendix B).
 - a. Any individual who is deemed a “Visitor” in his or her limited role in interacting with Youth and Children is except from the clearance and background check requirements found under Part III(A)(2). However, any individual who is deemed a Visitor must still sign the “Disclosure Statement” and “Code of Conduct”. (See, Appendix A and B)
 - 2. Complete all required clearances and background checks. As of the date of this Policy, they are:
 - a. Report of Criminal History from the Pennsylvania State Police (“PSP”)

- b. Child Abuse History Clearance from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (Child Abuse).
 - c. A Leader who HAS NOT been a resident of Pennsylvania for the last ten years shall also complete a National Instant Criminal Background Check through the Federal Bureau of Investigation.(FBI).
 - d. A Leader who HAS been a resident of Pennsylvania for the last ten years shall swear and affirm in writing that he or she has not been disqualified for service based upon criminal conviction(s). (See, Appendix A)
 - e. Additionally, FBI fingerprinting is required from all Staff.
3. It is the Staff and Leader's responsibility to ascertain and submit the required clearances to SPC's office manager.
 - a. If the required clearances, background checks, and/or affirmation reports no prior convictions or incidents the office manager is permitted to give approval for the Leader to begin service.
 - b. If the clearances, background check, and/or affirmation reveal any prior convictions or incidents, then the matter shall be referred to the Safe Church Committee within 30 days. The Safe Church Committee shall:
 - i. review the results of the clearance, background check and/or affirmation to determine whether the person is suitable to work with Children or Youth;
 - ii. meet with the person to question him or her directly, but is not required to do so;
 - iii. make the final decision regarding the suitability of a Leader to work with Children or Youth;
 - iv. when appropriate, SPC and the Safe Church Committee will work to find additional ways for that applicant for Leadership to be involved in the activities of SPC that do not relate to the nature of the offense.
 4. Staff must take part in the Child Abuse Prevention and Mandated Reporter Training, which must be taken online before work with Children and Youth can begin, and should be re-certified every five years. A certificate of the completed program must be given to the SPC office manager. All Leaders are encouraged, but not required, to take the program. Child abuse certifications for other licensed professions can also be submitted as long as they are accepted by the licensing board of the professional association. (The program can be found at the website: www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu)
 5. All Leaders must attend a Safe Church training workshop that will be conducted by a member of the Pastoral Staff and the Safe Church Committee:
 - a. The content will be reviewed biannually by the Safe Church Committee;
 - b. All Leaders should attend a training workshop every year;
 - c. All clearances, and background checks must be renewed every sixty months or as required by Pennsylvania State Law.
 6. The "lookback period" for criminal charges related to Child Abuse can be up to fifty years. The office manager will maintain an electronic file of all clearances and signed documents for Staff, Leaders and Visitors. The office manager will also maintain all Child permission forms, as well as Session minutes approving all Church-Sponsored

Events. The office manager will save all documents in a given year in one electronic folder or storage device. Session will get a completed report that this was done every year.

B. Adult Supervision

Our goal is to provide a safe physical, emotional and spiritual environment for all. SPC appreciates Leaders of many ages working with Children and Youth and will permit Leaders to assist in appropriate situations once the following Policies are met:

1. All Leaders must have been affiliated with SPC as demonstrated by participation in the worship and programming of SPC or through affiliation therewith for a reasonable time before he or she will be permitted to serve as a Leader with Children and Youth.
2. Open Door Policy: Each room set aside for Children and Youth at Church or on Campus shall either have a door with a window in it or a half door. The top half of all half doors shall remain open.
3. Rule of 3: There should be at least two Leaders with a group of Children or Youth. A Leader may be alone with a group (2 or more Children or Youth) in a room or open area that complies with the Open Door Policy as long as there is at least one other adult (Staff, parent, or other Leader) in the Church or Campus who is aware of their presence.
4. A Leader may meet one-on-one with a Child or Youth in a room or open area that complies with the Open Door Policy and as long as there is another adult in the immediate vicinity (within earshot), who is aware that the meeting is happening.
5. A Leader may be one-on-one with a Child or Youth in emergency situations (restroom trips, calming an upset child) as long as the other Leader(s) are notified just prior to and immediately after the situation is resolved. If the emergency situation will require more than five minutes and if the Child or Youth's parent or guardian is not available, another Leader should be asked to assist with the situation.
6. Only a Child's parent, guardian, or personal aide may assist a Child in toileting or in an incident regarding soiled clothing; this includes changing diapers.
7. A Leader may provide transportation to or from Campus for a Church-Sponsored Event only with the written consent of a parent/guardian. Written consent may be in the form of an electronic communication such as a text or email.
 - a. Leaders are strongly discouraged from being alone in a vehicle with Child or Youth. If at all possible, there should be a second Child or Youth or another Leader in the vehicle.
 - b. Leaders have the responsibility to make sure parents know the location of a Child or Youth and the identity and number of other persons in the vehicle.
 - c. Leaders must be at least 25 years old to transport a Child or Youth by vehicle on behalf of SPC. Clearances and background checks consistent with this policy, along with a valid state driver's license and valid insurance coverage is required prior to transporting a Child or Youth..

8. A Leader shall not meet with a Child or Youth in a private location where there are no other adults immediately present. Public places, such as restaurants and coffee shops, are acceptable places to meet as long as there are other adults immediately present.
9. There must be at least two Staff and/or Leaders accompanying Children or Youth on any overnight trips. If both male and female Children or Youth are present, male and female Leaders must be present. When staying overnight, an adult should never share a room with only one Child or Youth, with the only exception being parents or guardians with their own Children. If appropriate accommodations are not possible, use discretion with the Leader(s) on site.
10. No Leader should have secrets with Youth or Children.
11. Staff and Leaders are never to give gifts to individual Children or Youth without the prior knowledge of the parents.
12. Staff, Leaders, Volunteers, Visitors and others must show discretion before touching another person. Physical contact with Youth should occur only when appropriate and should not occur in private.
13. Leaders, Volunteers, Visitors and others that have contact with Youth or Children shall never be involved in a romantic or sexual relationship of any nature (including same sex) with any Child, Youth, or Youth Leader, regardless of the age of either the Leader or the Child, Youth, Youth Leader, or the difference in age.
14. Leaders shall never use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of Children.

C. Electronic Communication Guidelines

1. Direct Contact: It is permissible for Leaders to make contact with Children and Youth through electronic, non-vocal means pursuant to the following stipulations:
 - a. Parents/Guardians must be aware that the communication is taking place.
 - b. The communication is either public or there is a record of it stored electronically.
 - c. A Leader should make every attempt to not delete electronic communication that has been sent or received from a Child or Youth.
 - d. Any form of communication which does not allow for some kind of record (such as Snapchat) is not recommended for use by Staff and Leaders.
2. Any Staff or Leader who is active on social media may “follow” and “be followed by” Children or Youth connected to SPC pursuant to the following stipulations:
 - a. They have the consent and knowledge of the parents/guardians.
 - b. If Staff and Leaders choose to participate in social media in such a way that Children and Youth are aware of their participation, they should be mindful of what they are posting and how it might reflect on them as Leaders at SPC.
 - c. If Staff and Leaders choose to “follow” Children or Youth social media accounts, they shall be cautious in how they interact to avoid any type of behavior that could be seen as demeaning, inappropriate, or abusive.

- d. The Staff and Leader must accept all friend requests from SPC leadership and parents, unless there is a specified reason to deny the request made in advance.

D. Remote Programming Guidelines

1. Ensure that the video conferencing platform (such as Zoom or Google Meet) has security features enabled to prevent unauthorized users from entering a meeting (e.g., passwords & virtual waiting room). The meeting credentials should not be posted on a public domain.
2. Leaders are considered Mandated Reporters when facilitating remote programming.
3. The “Rule of 3” from Section (III)(B)(3) is applicable for remote programming, including the use of virtual breakout rooms.
4. Private chat functionality should be disabled, if possible.
5. When exiting a virtual meeting, all children/youth must exit first before the leader(s) exit.
6. Recording virtual meetings where children/youth are participating is not permitted.
7. Ensure that the leader’s screen is age and content appropriate prior to screen sharing (e.g., no offensive language or images).
 - a. Children/Youth should not be permitted to share screens, unless given permission by the leader as it relates to the lesson/program.
8. The leader is the first line of defense against inappropriate behavior and must act quickly to stop participants who violate expectations (e.g., by muting the participant’s microphone, stopping the participant’s video feed or removing the participant from the forum).

E. Outside Organizations Using Southminster Facilities

1. All individuals and groups using the Church or Campus with direct contact with Children or Youth for private lessons, community meetings, overnight accommodations, etc. must agree to abide by the Policy. They must sign the written agreement that they have read and understand the policies of SPC. Access to church facilities will not be granted without agreement to this policy. (See, Attached Appendix A and C)
2. Individuals using the Church or Campus for private lessons must also have all clearances, background checks and other forms completed, and agree to the “Rule of 3” and the “Open Door Policy”. If not following these policies, the instructor must have written permission from the parent/guardian that they are waiving these requirements in advance of a lesson taking place. Failure to follow these provisions will result in discontinuation of Church or Campus use.

IV. ADDITIONAL PRECAUTIONS FOR SELF-HARM

Although outside the scope of Child Abuse for mandated reporting, SPC strives to address all aspects of safety for Children and Youth in our community. With regard to issues of self-harm, for example: suicidal ideation, mental health crisis, eating disorder, or drug/alcohol abuse, etc.), all Leaders and Volunteers must immediately notify a member of the Pastoral Staff if they notice behavior disruptions indicating self-harm. Pastoral Staff will have annual training on community resources and available response options to help get the Child or Youth immediate care. Pastoral Staff will also notify parents. The Response Team will be notified for continuity and to support both parties. If the issue is a mental health issue as opposed to a report of abuse, the person becoming aware of this should direct the parents to Re:solve Crisis Network at 1(888)796-8226.

V. PERSONS WHO MUST REPORT ABUSE

According to Pennsylvania State Law, the mandate to report Child Abuse is imposed on any individual who comes into contact with Children or Youth in the course of his or her work or professional practice. Staff and Leaders who perform services for SPC should also consider themselves to be mandated reporters if they come into contact with Children and Youth during the course of their volunteer work. These mandates are criminally enforceable under Pennsylvania law. If an individual has enough suspicion to ask about a particular scenario, that is enough to report and the individual is mandated to do so. Legal immunity is granted to any individual who, in good faith, makes a report of suspected Child Abuse, even if he or she was not under a legal obligation to do so.

VI. INCIDENTS TO BE REPORTED – (SEE PA CHILD PROTECTION LAW – 42.42)

A. Persons Who Must Report Abuse

1. Alleged past or present physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect of a Child will be reported, regardless of where the incident occurred. Child Abuse disclosed directly to a Mandated Reporter must be reported to the proper authorities. In addition, second-hand reports of abuse that are received by a Mandated Reporter must also be reported to the proper authorities if they afford the Mandated Reporter “reasonable cause to suspect” that Child Abuse has occurred.
2. The mandate to report applies to all Child Abuse, not just abuse that has been perpetrated by SPC personnel. Possible abusers could include for example, parents, relatives, older siblings, neighbors, youth group or sports leaders, family friends and other Children. It is recommended that any doubt concerning the application or interpretation of these provisions should be resolved in favor of reporting. The civil authorities will determine the particulars and take appropriate action.
3. If ever in doubt, make the report. Both legally and by the expectations of this policy, if you are a Leader of SPC, you must activate the Response Team if you have any suspicions of Child Abuse.

B. General Procedures for Reporting a Child Abuse Incident

1. Childline: call **1-800-932-0313** or electronically:
www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home
2. If you reported the abuse by phone, file a CY-47 report within 24 hours with local Child Protection Services. (See Appendix D)
3. Provide a copy of CY-47 form to either member of the Response Team within 24 hours. This includes a member of Staff or any member of the Safe Church Committee. The first person given the report will create the full Response Team by notifying one other member most appropriate to respond to the particular scenario to complete the Response Team. Names for current Staff and Safe Church Committee members can be found on the SPC website www.spchurch.org and on the posted resource forms throughout the Church.
4. In the event of imminent danger, contact local police. A written report is to be made within 48 hours and sent to the Child Protective Services agency in the county in which the abuse occurred.
5. Under the new law, the DHS (Department of Human Services) will notify the mandated reporter of the results of the investigations within 30-60 days.
6. Do not discuss the situation with the alleged offender. You are not the investigator.
7. Confidentiality: Any communication regarding a Child Abuse case must be limited to the proper reporting authorities until such time as a clear determination of the allegation has been made.

C. Reports regarding Child Abuse will include:

1. The name, age, and address of the Child or Youth.
2. The name and address of the Child or Youth's parent or guardian.
3. The name and address of the church administrator.
4. The name, work and home address of the perpetrator.
5. The nature of the alleged offense.
6. Any specific comments or observations that are directly related to the alleged incident and the individuals involved.

D. If a Staff member or Leader is suspected:

1. Follow the steps above in "General Procedures for Reporting" and activate contact with the Chair of the Personnel Committee on Session or a member of the Safe Church Committee.
2. Notify SPC's liability insurance company (Cincinnati Insurance Company: 877-242-2544).
3. The accused individual will immediately be suspended from SPC and all activities pending the investigation and resolution of the accusation. This suspension shall be with pay and benefits.
4. Contact the Pittsburgh Presbytery. The Staff member on the Response Team will handle this portion.

VII. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure a safe environment for all Children and Youth who are served by SPC. By articulating a Policy through training and education, guidelines for prevention, recognition of Child Abuse and through a clear procedural response, SPC strives to establish an environment where the emotional, physical, and spiritual safety as well as the spiritual growth of our Children can be strengthened and nourished.

Southminster Presbyterian Church Safe Church Policy

APPENDIX A
Disclosure Statement

Print Name Here: _____

AFFIRMATION

As a Staff member/Leader in children and youth ministries; or as a Staff person who works with children and youth, I affirm my commitment to support Southminster Presbyterian Church as a safe place for Children and Youth. I recognize that Southminster Presbyterian Church has adopted the above Safe Church Policy. I have read and understand the policy, support it, and agree to abide by it. I affirm that I will do my part in providing a nurturing Christian environment in which our Children and Youth can develop in faith and in trust.

- I certify by my signature that I have not to my knowledge been the subject of any investigation, complaint or legal or church related action involving a reported instance of Abuse of Children or Youth, and I have never been refused, resigned from or been asked to resign from a position for reasons related to such abuse.

- I have been the subject of any investigation, complaint or legal or church related action involving a reported instance of abuse of children or youth, but I have never been refused, resigned from or been asked to resign from a position for reasons related to such abuse. I offer the description of the situation on the attached Addendum for your review.

Signature: _____

Name (Printed): _____

Date: _____

Southminster Presbyterian Church Safe Church Policy

ADDENDUM TO APPENDIX A

I have been the subject of an investigation or instance of alleged abuse of Children or Youth as follows (provide a summary of the factual circumstances):

The outcome of the matter was as follows:

The name and address of other persons knowledgeable of these circumstances are:

Signature: _____

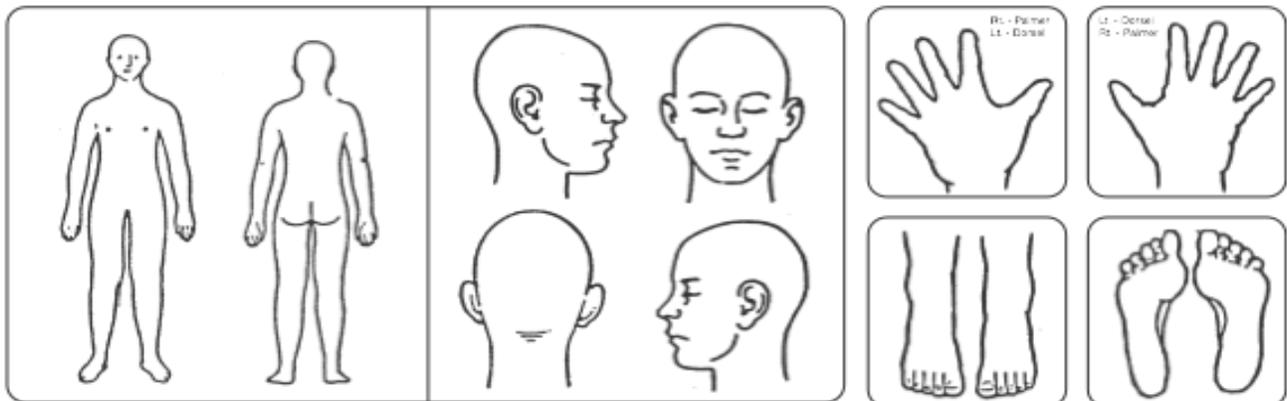
Name (Printed): _____

Date: _____

REPORT OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE (CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICE LAW - TITLE 23 PA CSA CHAPTER 63)

PLEASE REFER TO INSTRUCTIONS ON REVERSE SIDE, EXCEPT FOR SIGNATURE. PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE

1. NAME OF CHILD (Last, First, Initial)		SOC. SEC. NO.	BIRTHDATE	SEX <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F
ADDRESS (Street, City, State & Zip Code)			COUNTY	
1A. PRESENT LOCATION IF DIFFERENT THAN ABOVE			COUNTY	
2. BIOLOGICAL/ADOPTIVE MOTHER (Last, First, Initial)		SOC. SEC. NO.	BIRTHDATE	TELEPHONE NO.
ADDRESS (Street, City, State & Zip Code)			COUNTY	
3. BIOLOGICAL/ADOPTIVE FATHER (Last, First, Initial)		SOC. SEC. NO.	BIRTHDATE	TELEPHONE NO.
ADDRESS (Street, City, State & Zip Code)			COUNTY	
4. OTHER PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILD		SOC. SEC. NO.	BIRTHDATE	RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD
ADDRESS (Street, City, State & Zip Code)		COUNTY	SEX <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F	
5. ALLEGED PERPETRATOR (Last, First, Initial)		SOC. SEC. NO.	BIRTHDATE	RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD
ADDRESS (Street, City, State & Zip Code)		COUNTY	SEX <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F	
6. FAMILY HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION (Excluding Above Names)		RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD	NAME (Last, First, Initial)	RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD
A.			D.	
B.			E.	
C.			F.	
DESCRIBE INJURIES/CONDITION AND WHY YOU SUSPECT ABUSE/NEGLECT. INCLUDE EVIDENCE OF PRIOR ABUSE TO THIS CHILD, SIBLING OR PERPETRATOR. (PLEASE REFER TO OPPOSITE SIDE FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION). PLEASE NOTE EXACT LOCATION OF THE INJURY(S) ON MODEL BELOW.		COUNTY WHERE ABUSE OCCURRED		DATE OF INCIDENT



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Southminster Presbyterian Church Safe Church Policy

APPENDIX B

Code of Conduct

Print Name Here: _____

In the work of ministry of Southminster Presbyterian Church, we, as Staff, Leaders and Youth Leaders, recognize that Jesus affirms and values each child. Jesus said, whoever welcomes one child in my name welcomes me. Jesus said that we are not to allow children to stumble. We are to guide, encourage and nurture God's children so that they will develop a relationship with Jesus Christ (Matt 18:5-6).

Southminster Presbyterian Church is committed to protecting the Children and Youth who are entrusted in our care and to ensure that those offering services are in a right relationship with those who are receiving services. This includes promoting a healthy environment for all who participate in the activities at the church or outside the church.

We are called to "live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:1-3).

In this spirit, I commit that I will maintain the follow stipulations:

1. represent the Church in a faithful, authentic and loving way, supporting the teachings, disciplines and tradition of the Christian Church;
2. exhibit the highest Christian ethical standards and personal integrity in my day-to-day work and personal lives;
3. conduct myself in a professional manner in both church and work environments, avoiding any flagrant or public misconduct;
4. hold myself and others accountable to conduct and standards appropriate to their respective roles;
5. foster the dignity of each person and be committed to the best interests of others;
6. respect the integrity of all individuals and protect the confidentiality of all information to which they have access;
7. abstain from taking advantage of any relationship with a Child or Youth for their own benefit;
8. abstain from physical, sexual or emotional abuse towards anyone;
9. abstain from neglecting a Child or Youth who is in their care;
10. abstain from a romantic relationship of any kind with a child/youth whether physical, sexual, or emotional
11. pray for the Children, Youth, and families of the church community.

Signature _____
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Appendix C

Southminster Facility Usage Safe Church Agreement

Print Name/Organization Here: _____

AFFIRMATION:

_____ (print name or organization) affirm my/our commitment to support Southminster Presbyterian Church as a safe place for Children and Youth. I/We recognize that Southminster Presbyterian Church has adopted the above Safe Church Policy. I/We have read and understand the policy, support it, and agree to abide by it while utilizing the Southminster Campus. I/We understand that if we cannot agree to any of the terms outlined in the above document that we should not use Southminster facilities or agree to sign this form. I/We understand that ignorance of these laws and policies is not an excuse for any situation that occurs during my/our usage of the facility.

I/We take full responsibility for the approved clearances of the adults connected to our organization. I/We can choose in what capacity we need those documents secured, and assume full legal liability for those adults.

Signature: _____

Name (Printed): _____

Date: _____